LORRIN POTTER THURSTON

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Lorrin Potter Thurston

(1899 - )

Lorrin Thurston, widely known retired publisher of the Honolulu Advertiser and one-time chairman of the Hawaii Statehood Commission, is a fourth generation descendant of Asa and Lucy Thurston, first company missionaries to Hawaii in 1820.

With his noted father, attorney Lorrin Andrews Thurston, he discovered the Thurston Lava Tubes in the Volcano region on the Island of Hawaii.

His community service on Oahu and in Kailua-Kona has been extensive. He founded the Pacific Area Travel Association and, while president of the Outrigger Canoe Club, he started the Waikiki Beach Patrol to keep the club solvent.

Mr. Thurston moved from Honolulu to Kailua-Kona in the summer of 1971 with his wife, Barbara Ford Thurston, to build a new home on property he acquired in 1938 and on which Kamehameha the Great lived during the last years of his life.

In this transcript, Mr. Thurston relates the interesting history of his property in Kailua-Kona and discusses some of the issues that have caused confrontations between residents of that area. He also describes the discovery of the Thurston Lava Tubes and tells about the founding of the Hawaiian Volcano Research Association by his father in 1911.

Katherine B. Allen, Interviewer

# INTERVIEW WITH LORRIN POTTER THURSTON

At his Kailua-Kona home, Hawaii, 96740

July 10, 1971

T: Lorrin P. Thurston

A: Kathy Allen, Interviewer

A: Your family and the Shipmans are related, aren't they?

T: Well, that was by marriage only. My father's first wife was Herbert Shipman's father's sister [Margaret Clarissa Shipman, 1859-1891]. Her name was Clara and she had one child, who was my half-brother, now deceased--Robert [Shipman Thurston]. She died as a result of troubles during childbirth. After a few years, my father [Lorrin Andrews Thurston] married again [Harriet A. Potter] and my sister, Margaret Twigg-Smith, and I were products of that second marriage.

A: Margaret Twigg-Smith. Of course Twigg-Smith would be her married name now.

T: That's right.

A: And was her name just Margaret or did she have . . .

T: Margaret Carter Thurston. The Carter came in through Alfred Carter, who was my father's law partner. Alfred Carter was manager of Parker Ranch.

A: A. W.

T: A. W. And left Father the law practice and their joint partnership to take over management of the Parker Ranch.

A: I see. The information I have says you are a direct descendant of Asa and Lucy Thurston.

T: That's right.

A: The first company of missionaries to arrive in 1820. I wonder if you could tell a little bit about that. Whatever you know.

T: I know about all you'd read in books. I wasn't there.

A: No, I know you weren't but then families usually talk about these things and I wondered if there were any family stories that you remember or family histories that you recall in particular. Sometimes when you think back and reminisce, something strikes you.

T: You know, too bad I didn't know you were interested in this. There was a chap down there from Michigan recently, four or five months ago--we've got his name someplace--made quite a study of the Andrews and the Potters, which my mother's name was, and the Thurston family. And he had the genealogy just beautifully worked out in every direction. He could have given you everything just like that.

A: You don't remember who this was?

T: I could possibly find his name. See, the chap had just interested himself in this picture. He came in. He was very knowledgeable but very much inclined to be a bore.

A: Well, but he did get the. . . . You don't have a genealogy of your family?

T: Yes, there is a published genealogy. There were two volumes of it that I remember and I've got someplace in my library. I've got thirty-odd cardboard cases--large cases --of books that are and that have been in storage for fifteen years, I guess. But where it is in that mess, I don't know.

A: You should dig that out. You know, these genealogies are most interesting reading. They're really fascinating.

T: Some of them.

A: Well, most of them that have been published and put into book form, particularly.

T: Well, the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society has all of that--you know, Hawaiian Mission in Honolulu.

A: Cousins, do you mean?

T: Local Cousins' Society. Sure, they've got everything.

A: They do have? Well, I'm interested, of course, in you. You're sixth generation are you?

T: No. My great-grandfather would be [first]. I'm the

fourth generation. My son was the fifth and his son was the sixth.

A: Well, now I'm asking if you will recall your own childhood.

T: If what?

A: If you will recall your own childhood and early years here in Hawaii. You were born in Honolulu . . .

T: Oh, I haven't got the time to do that this morning. Really, we just moved one complete house from Honolulu. We got here yesterday. The day before we went over to Hilo and got two cars that were just loaded to the gills with stuff and we've got five more big van boxes coming in shortly and I just can't go into that.

A: Oh, I don't mean every bit of your childhood, Mr. Thurston. I was simply asking if you remember any outstanding events in your childhood. Well, several people have mentioned--or two anyway--time and distance in terms of traveling. I don't mean that, necessarily, but anything that you think might be of interest that you recall as a child. Any Hawaiian customs that you remember or anything . . .

T: Oh, naturally I've got thousands of memories. I've been a publisher and I've done a great deal of writing.

A: Well, I only want one [memory].

T: I just don't feel like going into it at the present time. I've got too many other things on my mind. Come up here after--give us about two months to get settled here and the accumulation of a lifetime in some decent order and the contract . . .

A: I'm sorry, I didn't realize that you had just moved up.

T: The contract for this new house is just about ready to be let and we're trying to work out all sorts of details on lighting and floor finishes and wall finishes and lumber and . . .

A: I understand what that . . .

T: Stepstone and whatnot and I just--my mind isn't in a reminiscent mood at the present time.

A: Well, you're so definitely in the present.

T: That's right.

A: I realize that. I didn't realize, though, that you had just moved up here. I'm sorry.

T: No. You see, yesterday we went in to get our two cars from Honolulu. We've sold our place on Diamond Head and moved out as clean as a whistle and it was a large house and it's been a helluva job that we've been in for two-and-a-half, three weeks.

A: I guess so.

T: And on top of that we've just finished that, which is a servants' quarters and equipment garage. And we're in the midst of this one, which'll be bigger than all of them put together. It's just quite a project, that's all.

A: Oh, I should say. Well . . .

T: I can tell you a little bit about this place, which is of interest.

A: All right. Yes, let's do that.

T: I started looking for property in Kona in 1921 when I graduated from Yale [University] and I think between then and 1932, why, I must have seen every beach property from Milolii to Kawaihae, no matter how you got to it--by air or by sea or by boat or by donkey or by mule or on foot. And I finally decided on [William] Doc Hill's place down at Keauhou as being the ideal spot that I wanted to live in but through a long combination of funny circumstances, why, I didn't get it.

I'd inquired about this place from Mr. Childs who was then local head of American Factors. He said, "Oh hell, that property's so tied up with owners you never could clear title." "Well," I said, "you live here"--and he was a big shot of the community at the time. "Tell you what I'll do. If you can clear the titles, I'll put up the money and we'll subdivide the thing into large pieces and go fifty-fifty on it." And he said, "Well, that's fair enough. That doesn't cost me anything."

So I waited seven years and nothing happened. Then I happened to meet an old-timer from up here who'd been in the tax office and knew land problems--who my father helped to keep out of jail--and he was very fond of the Thurstons. So I said, "Who owns that property next to Factors?" "Oh," he said, "that belongs to so-and-so and so-and-so. You want to buy it?" I said, "Well, I don't know whether I can afford it or not." "Well," he said, "the girl right

at this moment needs money badly, I know, and I'm quite sure she would sell." So, this was four in the afternoon and at 9:30 the next morning I got a call and he said, "If you'll have so much money available by eleven o'clock, I can buy her half-interest in thirty-eight acres." So I said, "Well, I don't know where I'm going to get the money but I'll have it." I did. Five years later, for five times as much, I bought the other half. So that brings us up to about 1938 and going into 1939.

I started to work here on the 28th of December of 1939. It was all just lava, nothing else. And this place evolved as a result of exposure and watching the surf and studying and seeing what one could do. I always wanted a harbor for a boat to go fishing and to go swimming. And so, this gradually evolved and then I began to find out things about it.

Kamehameha the Great lived right here for some time--seven years--prior to his death. This is where he slept and over there was where he ate and over where the guest house is, is where his servants lived; and over at the far end there, beyond the entrance to the pond--going into the King Kamehameha [Hotel] lot--was the old heiau. So he was self-contained and nobody was allowed on this place in the old days. You had to go around it. It was tabu.

A: Sacred.

T: Sacred. And the only penalty was that you got your head knocked off, so nobody broke the tabu. Kamehameha used to sit by the hour. He would sit on that stone, which was over here, and this big one was alongside of it and this (place where we were sitting under a kiawe tree), 'course, went right off into the water. He'd watch the fish and his canoes. That stone just fit him and that stone just fit his wife.

A: Oh, that's very remarkable. I'll have to take a picture of the two stones to go with <u>that</u> story. (Kamehameha's stone was small; his wife's was very large)

T: And the big stone down there in the yard was one that his wife also used to sit on. This was his favorite wife, Kaahumanu. And so, I started this whole project. I designed it, replanted it, and I've done eighty-five percent of the work by myself and the boys we've hired have been of some help.

Hello, "Lady." This is the mother of the most genuine poi dogs I've ever known. She's forty-seven varieties but she . . . ("Lady" and a Welsh Corgi were with us during most of the interview, sometimes lying or standing on the microphone)

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An old kahuna who lived down at Kahaluu--I can't remember his name at the moment but it'll come to me--through his grandson who worked for [Theo. H.] Davies and Company, said that his grandfather wanted to come see me. His grandfather had known my great-grandfather as a little boy and his great-grandfather was, at that time, in his late nineties and Asa [Thurston] died when he was well along in the eighties, so there is quite a span there. So I said I'd be delighted.

We'd finished these steps and we'd finished this terrace here. 'Course this (kiawe) tree was always here, supposedly the first kiawe in Kona. I don't know whether that's true or not. It is a female tree with no thorns and the ratio of female kiawes to male is very, very small --there's so many more males. So I've always kept this 'cause I go barefooted most of the time and I don't get thorns in my feet. But you can see basically what was starting to happen here, with the dynamiting that had taken place down there and the bulldozers and the shovels and so on.

So the old man came over and his grandfather--I can't remember his name but he was ashamed to speak English so he spoke in Hawaiian and I spoke English. I could understand him and he could understand me. So he said, "I would like to know what Mr. Thurston's plans are for the development of this property," which was translated duly. And I replied and gave him a general idea of what I was trying to accomplish here. We'd planted quite a few trees at that time.

So the old man sat here for quite a long time and just nodded his head; and then he started in talking Hawaiian very rapidly and he talked for about ten minutes without taking a breath.

His grandson laughed when the old man ran down and said, "Well, my grandfather has said quite a few things. I will try to translate. In essence, what he said was this, that he will now die happy and he now understands why the good Lord never let anybody buy this over all the years. He said, 'He was waiting till you could come--till you had the money to come--and till you could develop this place, which certainly is even farther than Kamehameha would have been able to had he chosen to do it, and it will become a place of great beauty. I will now die happy because this property is in the hands of the man the Lord intended it to go to.'"

A: How about that.

T: Which is, I thought, very sweet and very nice.

A: Oh yes. That's very touching; very moving.

T: So the old man thanked me with tears in his eyes and we talked a little bit about his remembering my grandfather. He was a young man at the time. And he died, oh, within two or three months after that down at Kailua.

But I think this place is a. . . . The name of this place is Lanihau. L-A-N-I-H-A-U. There's Lanihau-nui which is next door and this is Lanihau-iki, meaning little Lanihau, and Lanihau-nui is back of it [and means large or great Lanihau]. That belongs to the Greenwells.

The name puzzled me. Lani means heavenly; beauty. Hau--H-A-U--is normally the tree from which they make the Hawaiian outriggers or the amas [float for canoe outrigger] or 'iako [canoe outrigger]. H-A-O is iron or steel or very strong.

So I submitted this to John Lane, who was then alive, and Mary Pukui, who's still alive, and Reverend Henry Judd and two others--I forget now who they were--and asked them what this name meant, because many times Hawaiian meanings were hidden.

They asked a great many questions about the place. Was it on a point? Yes. You had a beautiful view up and down the coast? Yes. You had a beautiful view of the ocean? Yes. And the surf? Yes. And out on the point at times it's enormous; and is there a current that comes past that you can see sometimes? Yes, you can see it coming down the coast, coming around the point. And you have a beautiful view of the sunrise and of the sunset?

They finally came up with this hidden meaning which I think is very interesting: Lanihau is the place where the forces of the heavens and of the earth meet and all is quiet and peaceful. The moonlight and the sunshine, the waves, the grand weather, the storms, and so on, which is rather interesting, I think.

A: I would say that you are really in a very blessed spot.

T: Well, I think so. And it has always sort of appealed to me what that old Hawaiian said, that this place stood idle for years and nobody bought it. But I think the reason was that Childs, in all honesty, believed what he was saying about this property title. It's our land court title now and it took five years to clear it. There wasn't one obstacle, except one little piece of about a quarter of an acre in which they had bought a fifteenth-sixteenth interest in eight thousand square feet. Hackfeld [and Company] bought it and American Factors bought it from them; and so they sold it to me for what they paid for it--$75. I never could find the other sixteenth owner. But I finally took it to court and then I paid the taxes on it and we've

never had an heir come forward to claim it, directly or indirectly, and so now I've incorporated it into the whole.

A: How many acres do you have here in all?

T: Well, I sold twenty-eight acres last year and I have, roughly, ten acres left.

A: Ten. This whole property, then.

T: This whole property which, you see, went out to the lighthouse and then beyond the lighthouse down the coast for half a mile. And that twenty-eight acres I sold to Hilton Head [Company]. Out there at the edge of the lawn is roughly my boundary, where that white sand starts, and then it goes up and around in back of this house and in from that part over where it's been sold. And so I have the rest.

A: It's lovely. It's just a lovely spot and I notice that you have a variety of flowers here and fruit; coconut.

T: Well, it's been hard to develop this, living in Honolulu and coming up here only on weekends, and I think the longest time I've ever stayed here was a month, once. I've been up here for a couple of weeks maybe five or six times but I used to leave Honolulu on a Friday afternoon and I'd get over here Friday night by car from Hilo and I'd work Saturday and Sunday with the boys and leave early Monday from Hilo. And they would take off Monday and Tuesday so that they got their weekends with me and we worked together. And that way, why, we accomplished this thing. All of these magnificent walls of tons and tons and tons of stone were put in by a Filipino and a Hawaiian who helped him.

A: Beautiful wall, the way it curves.

T: It is. And that's absolutely solid, goes right down to solid pahoehoe. We've had all sorts of storms here. And we had to raise the wall to its present height. It used to be just the same height as the grass. I had to raise it that much higher but since we've done that two-and-a-half foot addition, we've had not the slightest trouble, even with some pretty bad storms.

A: Well, it certainly is a safe harbor, I would say.

T: But this spot here, if there's any breeze at all--north, east, south, or west--you'll get it right here. This is high enough, you see, and it's open enough all the way

around, so there's nothing to stop the flow of air.

A: Yes, this is great. A very cool spot. [Lanihau also means cool heaven, according to Place Names of Hawaii.]

T: It's really going to be a magnificent spot for a home and we're building a rather large one-story home. It will be a story-and-a-half high in the middle and the wings will be a little bit taller than normal, with very wide overhanging eaves and with the idea of cross-ventilation all the way through. I think it's going to be a very beautiful spot. I hope I live to see it finished. I think I will.

A: I think so. I think yes, indeed you will. I'm sure of it. Yes, I think that kahuna knew what he was talking about, so. This is really an ideal, an idyllic spot.

T: I don't know of any place in Hawaii where people are more friendly yet more antagonistic to new ideas than is the case in Kona. There is resentment. I've been regarded by many people as an outsider in spite of the fact that my grandfather was here long before their families arrived. A very great resentment.

Years ago in 1925, why, I did a whole series of editorials on Kona. They're all a matter of record. I've got copies of all of them someplace in my files. I've kept very voluminous scrapbooks all my life. One of the ideas was--and I took the time to go into this seriously--I found that I could have moved every store from the corner by the King Kamehameha Hotel, by Bob McWayne's property, clear around to the palace and back 150 feet, torn down the sea wall, brought back the sand beach where I learned to swim as a kid, plant coconuts there and have the magnificent beach and coconut grove that we used to have here. It would have cost about $350,000.

A: Um hum. Quite a sum.

T: Yeh. You'd have thought I was utterly nuts to even suggest such a thing. Any one of those places there would be worth $350,000 today if you had that sort of thing.

I protested the original placement of the first airport. I said it before, I think, one of the largest meetings that's ever been held in Kona--before the Hawaii Aeronautic Commission--to present my suggestions as to an alternate site. And I had large pictures, six-by-eight feet, of the location that they finally decided on and of the alternate location, which was simply in and over towards the new airport, not quite as far as it is. It would have been just as simple to build it there. A little bit long-

er road but they could have extended it either way and it wouldn't have hurt anybody. And they wouldn't have wasted a million and a half dollars as they did this way.

Well, you'd have thought--I was just a pariah. Even my own sister came to the meeting and she was just as mad as could be. The people had said that I was trying to buck the airport; I was trying to keep Kona from getting service. And, Lord, I think I've used the airport probably more during the years than anybody living in Kona and I was at that time. But it was just the way they misinterpret things here. I was an outsider trying to block them.

I tried to do a great many things in Kona and I always met with the stiffest of opposition. I've noticed that that has been true of many others who have tried to do things and, quite frankly, I at long last decided I would mind my business and let others mind theirs. I pay my own way, I always have, and have never taken a nickel out of Kona. I've put many and many a dollar, not nickel, into Kona. And I mind my business and let happen what may.

It's a rather discouraging situation because, in addition to mauka versus makai--mauka being the old-timers like the Greenwells and the Parises and the Walls and the Hinds; the makai people being the interlopers like the Inter-Island Airways and the Inter-Island Resorts and the Thurstons, et cetera--there's a huki-huki between the two. Then you add to that men like Senator Hill, bless his soul. I think he was just afraid that Kona was going to develop ahead of Hilo and he did everything he could in the background to stop that from happening, to protect his own business interests in Hilo, which I don't deny him the right to do. But I mean he didn't have the vision to see that if this place developed it would help everything else on this island too. The same as Rockefeller's not doing anybody any harm; it's doing a lot of good to a lot of people. But there's been that thing which has made progress here very difficult. The old-timers are very set in their ways and they're not open to change and so why bother with them. I do what I want on my own land and pay for it. And I'm perfectly happy.

A: May I ask you--if you were to be in a history book, though you probably are already, what would you want to be remembered the most for? What do you consider your greatest achievement?

T: Well, I think two. I was a chairman of the Statehood Commission for the last five years before statehood was granted. I was one of only five men that were privileged to attend the signing of the statehood bill. Even [John A.] Jack Burns was, through politics, not invited to <u>that</u>. I put in five years there against very vicious opposition,

which is another long story.

And second, I think because I founded and established and thought of the Pacific Area Travel Association and was its original founder. PATA. P-A-T-A. It takes in all of those who are actively interested in the travel business in the Pacific--the carrier, the hotel, the transportation people--and they have affiliated members who sell to those who are directly interested and so on. That has grown from an original organization of fourteen people to its present status of around eleven hundred and a very important factor in Pacific travel.

I think my many years in the Chamber of Commerce, ending up as its president, were highly worthwhile. You never really realize what the Chamber of Commerce accomplishes until you've been a member of every type of committee and every office, finally ending up with president and then, after that, becoming an advisor perhaps for a year or so. And that was a very great interest.

I enjoyed the work with Hawaii Volcano Research which Father was the founder of [in 1911], which pre-dated the federal government's interest in volcano research and made it possible.

I've enjoyed my many years of association with the Children's Hospital in Honolulu, which I'm no longer connected with but I was for many years.

A: Was Dr. [Thomas A.] Jaggar the head of that volcano research?

T: Oh yes, but there were others before Dr. Jaggar. Dr. Perrett was the first one to be head of the Hawaiian Volcano Research Association. He was a volcanologist brought here and he had specialized on Vesuvius, Etna, and Stromboli volcanos.

A: What was his first name, Dr. Perrett's?

T: I'm sorry, I can't remember it. Then there was a man by the name of Wood, H. O. Wood, that took over from Dr. Perrett. Dr. H. O. Wood. Then I believe Dr. Jaggar came in after Dr. Wood.

A: Yes. That [volcanic research] certainly is a great contribution, since this volcanic area is helpful to the moon-space travel as well.

T: Well, I don't know what affect it had on moon-space travel.

A: Well, the volcano area has had because of its similarity to--or rather what they thought would be its similarity to --the moon. [Astronauts studied the volcano region geo-

logically prior to going to the moon.]

T: Well, you know, I was a director or president of the Outrigger Club I guess the longest of any man--a director for eighteen years and president for five years. And I had the unhappy duty of increasing its dues from fifty cents a month to a dollar a month and they just about rode me out of town. But it was a fascinating experience.

I started the Waikiki Beach Patrol which organized canoe surfers and surfboard lessons and so on. William Mullahey, who just recently retired from Pan American and who had been the head of all the lifeguard service--some six hundred men--at Jones Beach outside of New York, was the first manager of the Waikiki Beach Patrol, owned by the Outrigger Canoe Club. And I organized it to keep the club from going broke. We made five or six or seven hundred dollars a month net out of that thing and it kept the Outrigger Club going. Dad Center was there in all those days.

A: Oh yes, I remember. Um hum.

T: And Walter MacFarlane. But one thing I wasn't proud of was the fact that canoe racing had practically died. In 1930 I organized the first Kona canoe races in many years and got the transportation and the medals and the wherewithal to keep ninety-odd kids from Honolulu for five days here. And we had our day of racing on Kealakekua across the bay to Cook's Monument for two years and then the third year it was up here in Kailua. And then they took it to Honolulu. And then the interest died in the thing because it became too commercialized and so on. But it started the canoe racing again, which has never let up.

A: What year was that?

T: 1930. E. E. Black was really the one that made the thing possible because he had finished a contract to rebuild the road from Huihui Ranch to Puuwaawaa and on to what is now the start of the Saddle Road. He used the first bulldozer in the history of the islands.

A: Did he really? That's interesting.

T: And he made a good many dollars on that road and he wanted to do something in return for the people of Kona. So, knowing that I knew something about the district, he came to me and I suggested perhaps we should have the rebirth of the canoe races and he put up $3,000, I think, in the way of expenses and we carried the ball from there, which was very interesting.

A: They are still carrying on those races. Canoe races.

T: Yes. The old Thurston Lava Tubes up here at the Volcano is rather interesting. I found that.

A: I didn't realize that.

T: Most people don't. I was with my father and we were looking for lava tubes. Father used to be head of the Hilo Railroads and also of Olaa Sugar Company and he used to bring the family up in the summertime and we'd have a house either at the Shipmans' or at the Volcano House or Peter Lee's or someplace like that, so he'd have a chance to be with his family. I had nothing better to do so I started collecting stalagmites and stalactites.

He told me that there's a whole bunch of craters down the line there and sometimes there were tubes leading off the bottom of them. Maybe we could find some. So we'd gone around the present craters and he was crashing through the brush--he was heavy like I am now--back from the edge. I went to the edge, with a lehua tree hanging out over. I got onto it and looked down and it was all hollow under me and I said, "Dad, it's all hollow underneath here. Looks like there's a cave going in there." He couldn't get out and see so we went clear around and shinned down the side and through all that brush and tree ferns and came up and found the talus slope where the roof had fallen in and it was twenty-feet-high sheer rock there. We couldn't get up there, so three days later Dad organized a party and we came down with the two ladders which were tied together and lanterns. Margaret Shipman insists that she was the one that found it, but I happened to be with Dad alone.

A: But it was named after you.

T: It was named after us, yes. I don't know if it was named after me or after Dad. We were both there.

A: Named for the Thurstons who discovered it. That's very interesting. You know, sometimes we take names for granted so much that we don't think, why was it named this? The reason, as you have just indicated, was because you discovered it. I think it is very worthwhile to alert people to find out <u>why</u> they're called the Thurston Lava Tubes or Kuakini Highway.

Is that Kuakini Highway, by the way, really named after John Kuakini Lindsey, the cowboy?

T: Well, it's Governor Kuakini, not Kuakini Lindsey. It was Governor Kuakini. He pre-dated Lindsey.

A: Oh, but he takes his name from Governor Kuakini. I think that's the right connection.

T: I think so. But that goes back into old Hawaiian history. Governor Kuakini was in charge here after Kamehameha.
You know, Bill [William] Paris, if you could ever get him to talk, has got some fascinating old stories. He's very reticent but if he could ever be gotten through Margaret Paris, his wife, who was Margaret Hind, Mona Hind Holmes' sister.

A: Well, I do have the Parises down on my list also.

T: What?

A: I have the Parises listed; the three Hind sisters . . .

T: Read me some of your names there. Maybe I could help you.

A: Well, these are the names that I listed. The original list of names is here.

T: As far as Kona is concerned.

A: Yes. As far as this island is concerned, as a matter of fact. This is the list of names I was given originally. And then I started from that and I didn't realize but the whole island--this whole Island of Hawaii--is one big family. I just spoke to Amy Greenwell this morning. She also, I think, mentioned the Parises.

T: Well, you're making one mistake if you've only got one Greenwell there. There was Arthur, Henry, and Frank Greenwell, you see.

A: Let me put them down on the list.

T: Arthur, Henry and Frank. And the original--I always forget what his name was. Henry, I believe.

A: Yes.

T: The father came from Australia and then they had three sons, you see--Arthur, Henry and Frank--and they're the ones that are the largest land owners in Kona.

A: Oh, well, that's what I understood.

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T: Most of these people are not necessarily knowledgeable about Kona. They're knowledgeable about old-time Hawaii.

A: Well, you see, we do want some of that too.

T: Oh yes, I appreciate that but in this particular instance, where you're perhaps making a study of the Island of Hawaii, there're a good many of these that have very little to contribute; and quite a few that would not contribute anything.

A: Oh.

T: You know, the story of the Parker Ranch--the true story of the Parker Ranch--is a fascinating one. And I don't think anybody's ever going to be able to get it.

A: Why?

T: Because nobody would write the truth.

A: Well, what if I were to?

T: Well, for example, Alfred Carter, without whom there could be no Parker Ranch. If he hadn't been a strictly honest man, why, he would have owned the Parker Ranch and not the Parkers and he would have done so legally. He was strictly honest, ethical, of the highest possible caliber. He knew nothing more about ranching than you know about piloting a moon rocket but he was a Harvard graduate, a student, and he bought every book on ranching that he could find and he gave his life to it.

The problem that he immediately met was drunkenness--liquor among the Hawaiians--which had been brought about by the Parker brothers who enjoyed wine-women-and-song and the gay time. Live today and the hell with tomorrow was the principal approach.

Thelma Parker had the brains to buy out each of her brothers in turn until she controlled the ranch and so you must give her the credit. [Thelma Parker was an only child and after her father died was the heiress to one-half of the Parker Ranch partnership, the other partner being Samuel Parker who eventually sold her his half-interest through her court-appointed guardian, Alfred W. Carter.]

Then she got this man, Alfred Carter, than whom she could not have made a better choice--a man of great honor and integrity--and he had carte blanche to do as he wanted. He set his own salary, he did everything, and he made a very great success of that ranch. His problem was the old Hawaiians used alcohol; and loose morals and all the rest were fantastic.

As my father's ex-law partner and as his bosom friend, he finally consented, at my father's urging and the urging of others, to write his memoirs. He dictated to his daughter, Edith Podmore--Edith Carter Podmore, Ernest Podmore's wife--Ernest is dead--these stories, day after day after day. He'd just talk. And she would transcribe the notes and type them and bring them to him; and then he would blue-pencil them to a point where all the human interest was practically taken out of them. Very much like the old missionary letters, not even excluding my own great-grandmother, Lucy. She had far more devoted to the content of Asa's sermons than she did with the people that she had to do her part among and their problems and so on, many of which were far more fascinating than the content of his sermons. But that was edited out by her and by the New England Mission Society, just like Alfred Carter edited his own memoirs so that nothing that was unhappy or critical of the Hawaiians or of anybody finally appeared.

I was privileged to read the final book that Mr. Carter had printed at his own expense. Knowing that I was interested in Hawaii and its background and so on and have quite a famous library on it really, he let me read his book. I tried in every way to buy a copy. He would not sell it to me. I haven't got a copy today. I don't know who has.

A: What's the name of it? What is it called?

T: I don't know. I don't remember. I think it was The Parker Ranch or something like that.

A: By A. W. Carter.

T: A. W. Carter, yes. But it's never been given general circulation. Whether he did it for his own satisfaction or memoirs--I guess that's the only thing he did it for--and whether Richard Smart has a copy of it or not, I don't know. But as Mr. Carter's own daughter, Edie, told me, he edited all the choice tidbits out of it that would reflect human interest.

A: That's too bad.

T: Tragic, I think.

A: Yes it is, because that's what books are really for, aren't they? The human interest value.

T: That is correct. And there's a lot of good as well as a lot of bad in any reminiscences, as you know, but to eliminate the bad is like sweeping it under the rug. Sooner

or later the facts are going to come up. You might as well tell about them frankly and have the truth about the bad as well as the good come out.

A: It would seem so. Then everybody can relax about it.

T: Yeh. Well, I've been urged by many people to write my reminiscences many times and perhaps I'm approaching a time when I will do that. This (his place in Kona) has been my obsession and my dream and my goal for the major part of my adult life and I want to finish it before I look around for something else to do.

A: Yes.

T: Which I will always do. It's not a question of money--I've got all I need and more--but there are a lot of things that I do know, like Herbert Shipman does, and like the Parises do and so on, that will not be repeated.

A: Yes. Well, of course there were times during the interview with Mr. Shipman when he asked me to turn off the recorder, which I did, and it's for his own good reason.

T: Um hum.

A: And with good judgment, I have no doubt. So I respect these off-the-record mentions. And sometime in the future it will all be, just as you said; it will all be recorded. It needs to be.

T: Um hum.

A: It really needs to be. The truth needs to be known, is what it amounts to, I suppose. So. . . . But I don't know, Mr. Thurston, right now, how this will shape up. I don't think anybody who begins a project of this sort knows just exactly how it is going to turn out until it starts to take its own shape.

T: Well, that's very interesting. Who have you dealt with so far?

A: Well, I first went to Mr. Shipman. And then . . .

T: You mean he was the start of your whole thing?

A: That's right. Well, first of all I went to, in Honolulu, because I started this on June 24th . . .

T: Of this year?

A: Uh huh. I went to Mr. Borthwick because he's ninety-nine years old.

T: Bill?

A: Bill [William] Borthwick. I wanted to get his story before it's too late, even though he may outlive all of us; we don't know. I'm trying to give priority to age in doing this. Now this does not always apply, only in his case because I did him first. Then I went to Miss Signa Wikander, who was a Latin teacher at McKinley High School.

T: To whom?

A: Miss Signa Wikander, who is a . . .

T: Oh, Wikander. Carl Wikander's sister.

A: He came and did the carpentry work in Kawaiahao Church.

T: Her father?

A: Yes. Those were the only two before I came here. Mr. Watumull was anxious for me to come over here and concerned about getting these things recorded before it's too late.

T: Yes. Well, I think it's an admirable thing to do. And tell Mr. Watumull I'll be very happy to work with him on the thing as time goes on.

A: Very good. I shall tell him. I shall tell him that.

T: I believe it's an admirable thing to do. There's so much that is always too late.

A: Well, that's what we realize. We realize that too much has gone by already. I don't even know the scope of this yet. All I know is that I feel as if I am doing something terribly important.

T: Well, I think you are.

A: And the extent of it, I do not know, but I feel my responsibility to it and I'm giving it everything I have.

T: I think Dick [Richard] Lyman is an awfully good one for you to follow through on, one of the trustees of the Bishop Estate. He's from the Puna Lymans.

A: I have him on my list also.

T: Well, he is more vocal than some of the others might be. And certainly his memoirs of the Puna area of this country, along with Herbert Shipman's, would give you almost as complete a record as you could get. I think that between the Greenwells and Mrs. Henry Greenwell, who is the matriarch of all of the Greenwell clan and is still living . . .

A: Does she live out here in Kona?

T: She's in the hospital here, I believe.

A: Oh oh.

T: And has lived there most of the time but she certainly is one that you should get to talk.

A: She lives at the hospital?

T: Why, I think so. I think she had a stroke or something like that.

A: Oh.

T: I've never been privileged to know her too well, just a casual nodding acquaintance. But, after all, they were--there're many things they did that I didn't like but there're many things that they've done that are most admirable.

A: Yes, I'll see if I can. Would that be the Kona Hospital?

T: Yes. Any one of the Greenwells can tell you.

A: Well, I went to one of the young ones, actually. I went to Amy Greenwell this morning.

T: Well, Amy is the one that's supposed to be the most intelligent as far as the old Hawaiian folklore and legend is concerned. I think sometimes when you become too much of an expert, sometimes you begin to get into a pattern.

A: Well, she was most interesting. Of course her main interest is natural science.

T: Yeh.

A: But she gave me the information about her own family which is helpful. Everyone is very busy, I realize that. I don't want to impose on anyone and yet I need to reach them.

T: Yes.

A: I just think I have to come back, that's all.

T: I don't see how you can do it otherwise. Take old Alice Luahine here. Luahine, the--fascinating story back of her.

A: Iolani?

T: Iolani Luahine. And entirely apart from her dancing and her outstanding ability on chants and so on is her basic background knowledge which was very deep.

A: She represents to me, everytime I see those photographs of her, the spirit of the islands really.

T: Um hum.

A: In the spirit sense, before Christianity. The [pre-missionary] spirit of the islands.

T: Well, you know old Alice Brown that has passed on now but she was a custodian of Hulihee [Palace] here for some time. Alice Brown was one of the reasons, I think, that I bought this property. I was over visiting my property and I invited her to have dinner with me one night at the Kona Inn, which she seemed delighted to do. After dinner she said, "Would you . . ."--it was a beautiful summer night--she said, "Would you have the courage to go over onto the point there--Kamehameha's old place?" I said, "Courage? Why, what do you mean?" She said, "Why I don't know, but the Hawaiians won't go there at night." I said, "Let's go and find out what they were afraid of." And so we scrambled across the stone wall, through cactus and lantana, and finally landed on this beach out here and sat and smoked a couple of cigarettes and went home. Nobody molested us or anything but I could expand from that place in a dozen directions as far as old Hawaiian legends are concerned that are quite interesting.

A: Well, you broke the kahuna then because if nothing happened, you see . . .

T: Well, it ties in with the old Hawaiian's prediction. This was not to be sold to anybody until I came along.

A: Yes.

T: Until I was ready and able to finance it.

A: Yes.

T: As Frank Greenwell said one time when he came through here about noon--he used to ride his ranch which joins here and quite frequently and so he came by about noon one day. It was hot as the hinges and I was sitting right up here and the boys were working down below and I said, "Come on, Frank, get off your horse and sit in the shade for a minute with me." So he said, "What're you doing here?" So I explained to him and he said, "If I'd had any idea this could be made so beautiful, I'd own it; you wouldn't." And I said, "Well, thank god you were too lazy to get off your horse and look." That was an interesting little comment.

A: Very. Yes, that is because . . .

T: And I think I'm the only man that Frank Greenwell ever sold land to. He sold a good deal of land out here in the original Kona airport for fifty dollars an acre. After five years and for twenty times as much, he sold seven acres of interior land which had no beach frontage at all to me, raising the price on it, which was so high he thought I would never buy it. But I did. I almost caused a family feud.

Well, it's past lunchtime now.

A: Yes, yes.

T: And . . .

A: I'd like to take a picture, if I may.

T: A picture?

A: Yes. Well, I'd better snap a couple of you. I'd like to get those rocks in the background. See if I can get them in there. Yes, they're there with you.

T: Eh?

A: They're there with you; one on either side of you. I hope they will show up. Now I'll take another one just to be sure that it turns out. In this shady spot, it would be wise to use a flash. This is a lovely location and I've never known a kiawe tree without thorns.

T: No.

A: Very good. Yes, time marches on, doesn't it?

T: Someday you ought to get on the trail of where Kamehameha the Great is buried.

A: Oh really?

T: You can get as many versions of that as there are people that know.

A: Well, that could make a book in itself, couldn't it? Legends about . . .

T: It certainly could. I think I know. I'm not sure. And I'm not going to find out whether I'm right.

A: What's your version?

T: I'm not going to tell you.

A: Oh, you're not?

T: No.

A: Why? Why not?

T: Because I don't want to have any part of it.

A: Oh, you don't want to be among the guessers. Or maybe you do know.

T: No, I just suspicion; I don't know. I know a good many others have suspicions and they've all been proved they were wrong. I'm not even going to go that far.

A: Well, there are any number of stories that could be so-- could be written about that, I imagine.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen

Edited by Lorrin P. Thurston, 1979

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# THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.